



Only Darkness by 2Dglasses

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Summary: Did Doctor Brenner ever really care about Eleven?

Only Darkness

She tried. She had really tried this time. She had sat there in that glaring, bright white room on that big metal chair and stared at the cinder block in front of her. She would have been able to do it, she knew she could, but it had been a long day and she didn't get enough time to rest before being forced to work again. So, as she she sat on the cold steel, staring at the block that should have been in the middle of the air by now, she knew that behind that glass Papa was watching.

She was exhausted. Every time she willed herself to make the block move she felt a wave of pain pulse through her skull. She could also feel the familiar warm damp feeling of blood dripping from her nose down onto her upper lip. She just couldn't do it today.

Without warning, the door burst open and the two orderlies came stomping towards her. She instantly knew where she was going. With one pleading look shot to her Papa through the glass, the wires were pulled off of her buzzed head and the tiny girl was ripped unceremoniously from the chair before being hauled outside. She kicked and struggled with all her might as she was dragged down the long, cold corridor. Each step she got closer to the dark room she could feel her breath thin out more and more.

She screamed and thrashed and as they reached the heavy metal door she was harshly thrown down onto the hard ground.

"Ow!"

One of the orderlies exclaimed and looked down at his arm. Four deep scratch marks ran down along his forearm. Eleven didn't even realise what she had done before she heard heavy thuds coming towards her.

"You little-"

The orderly took his baton from his belt and raised it above his head. The girl didn't have time to react before she felt a pain erupt in her arm. She yelped as a sickening crack rang through the tiny room.

"Jesus, man. What the hell?"

The other orderly said as his counterpart returned his weapon to his side, simply watching how the girl on the ground clutched her arm and cried.

"Fucking deserved it."

Without another word, Eleven was left crying in the cold, dark room, alone, scared and in pain.

It was a long time before anyone came. Eleven had stopped trying to count how long it took for someone to come and take her back to her room. It seemed that anything she did lately landed her back in here.

Eventually, the door was opened and the light from the corridor pooled in to reveal the tiny girl lying on the ground facing the wall. He stepped through and approached her.

"Eleven. Are you awake?"

She didn't answer. The girl's silence prompted him to kneel down beside her.

"You know why you're in here."

Again nothing. Usually, she was made explain what she had done before she was ever let out. And usually, even if it felt wrong to her, she did.

But this time, she didn't even move an inch. It was strange. He reached to her and placed his hand on her shoulder. She was shaking and it was then that he noticed the ever so quiet whimpers coming from her quivering lips.

"Eleven?"

He gently pulled her shoulder back so that she was now lying on her back. Her face was damp, her expression filled with pain. Her dark eyes looked up at him. She was scared.

"P-Papa... it h-hurts..."

Brenner furrowed his brows at the girl's words. He saw just how much her body was shaking as he brought his eyes down to see what she was referring to. Then he saw it. She was clinging onto her left arm. He reached for her.

"Let me see."

She instinctively flinched away, but he remained firm.

"Eleven. I won't hurt you."

She weakened her hold and let him remove her grip on her injured arm. What he saw made his blood heat up. An angry, dark bruise was painted on the girl's soft skin covering her forearm. He stared at her injury in silence for a moment before looking at her small face. He softened his expression after seeing how distressed she was.

"Come on. Let's get you back to your room."

He reached down and gathered the shivering child into his arms. As he carried her out of the darkness he felt her little breaths against his neck.

"I... s- orry..."

Was all she managed to say. He looked down at her.

"Shh, Eleven. I'll make it better."

He carried her into her sparse bedroom and lay her down gently on her immaculate bed. He sat down on the mattress next to her and saw her expression. Those big, dark eyes told him that she was in pain, but trying not to show him. Like she was supposed to. She looked at him through furrowed brows and clenched teeth.

"Let me take a closer look."

He gently removed her hand and held up the bruised arm to inspect the injury. He took in the sight of every hue of discolouration painted onto her smooth skin.

"Accident."

Her small voice brought his eyes down once more to her face.

"What happened?"

He knew that he would review the footage back to see how Eleven had gotten hurt, but he wanted to hear what she would say. He watched her mouth open slightly and her eyes lose focus as she searched her very limited vocabulary to find the words she needed.

Eventually she realised that she didn't know how to say what she needed to so instead she silently moved the hand of her good arm and brought it up to hover over his bigger arm. She slowly mimicked a scraping movement over his suit jacket in the hopes that he would understand.

He did.

"You hurt one of the orderlies."

Her eyes sadly found his.

"A-Accident."

She innocently repeated.

"Do you remember what I told you about struggling?"

He saw her swallow and cast her eyes down at her small hand which was now feeling the rough fabric of the bed cover.

"S-Scary."

"The dark room?"

She nodded sadly.

Her expression almost made him feel something. He reached down and placed his cold hand over her smaller one.

"You go to the dark room only when you disobey. You know that."

The girl didn't understand this. She had really done her best to do what she was told.

"I... tried-"

Brenner shifted on the bed to fully face the girl and moved his hand up to her shaking shoulder.

"Eleven."

Her tiny face looked up at his.

"I asked you to lift the block. Did you lift it?"

She shifted under his heavy gaze, his hand feeling like a cinder block itself.

"Did you?"

He repeated and stared down at her until she shook her head in defeat. A tear fell down her smooth cheek and her breath hitched. She knew she shouldn't cry in front of Papa, but the guilt she was feeling mixed with the pain in her arm was too much.

Seeing the girl's distress, he let out a small sigh and shifted his attention to her arm once again.

"As for this..."

He gently took her arm again and rubbed along the bruising.

"Can you feel that?"

She nodded tensely.

After a few more moments of observation he set her arm down and made a signal up to the camera in the corner of the white room before turning back to her.

"It's not a bad break. Probably a small fracture."

She just looked at him through big eyes, not understanding what he said. So far, the minimal education she was receiving had not included the human body.

Just then, a woman entered the room carrying a tray. She placed it

down at the foot of the bed before swiftly leaving again. Brenner took something from the tray and turned to the girl.

"This will feel cold, okay?"

He took her arm in one hand, and in the order he placed a bag of ice against her bruised skin. She flinched at the harsh sensation.

"Hold this here like this."

She hesitantly placed her hand where his was and held the ice against her own skin as he prepared the splint. His movements were precise, but gentle. He was doing his best not to hurt the girl further as he could see she was in considerable amount of pain already.

She watched through big glassy eyes as he wrapped the white bandages around the splint he had set against her skin. He tied the top so that there was a firm limit to her movement, and when he was satisfied with his work he placed his hands on his lap before glancing at Eleven's face. She was simply looking back at him, her expression filled with her usual natural unease.

He sighed at the scared girl next to him.

"I know you didn't mean to hurt that man."

She bit her lip and broke her gaze, the guilt becoming overwhelming.

"You don't have to worry about him again, okay?"

She didn't know what he meant so she simply blinked up at him with a furrowed brow. Without another word he stood up and reached for the edge of the covers that the girl was sitting on. She scooted back a bit so that he could pull them back. She returned to her position to allow him to place the covers over her.

She wordlessly lay back and rested her head on the pillow. He took the stuffed lion that was at the foot of the bed and rested it just under the girl's chin, causing her to rest her good arm around her furry friend. Her only friend.

Brenner knelt down next to the bed and placed his hand gently on

Eleven's head, brushing his fingers along her closely sheered, soft hair.

"Rest. You've had a long day."

Then, with a smile, he stood up and left the room. She had a strange feeling in her chest. Her Papa was nice to her. Not cold. Not indifferent. Actually nice.

And for the first time since she could remember, she fell asleep without a sense of dread in her stomach.

Eleven had no concept of time yet, but based on her usual routine and the frequency of her time spent in the room with the table and the head machine, she knew that she was being allowed to rest longer than before. It kind of made her nervous, but her arm was hurting and if she was made make things hover again she knew she'd be unable to. So she was actually glad for it. No risk of failure meant no risk of punishment.

And Papa had been gentle with her lately. He would wake her up quietly and take care of her arm. Before she slept he would read to her and help her sound out the words she hadn't heard before. Again, it made her uneasy. Papa was never obvious when it came to what he was feeling towards her at any given moment, but the usual coldness of his tone was now tinged with a hint of warmth.

The last time he came in to look at her arm he didn't redress it. He gave it one more look over and patted her on the head.

"Looks like you've healed, Eleven. Do you know what that means?"

She glanced down and smoothed her hand against her still slightly bruised skin. She shook her head.

"It means we can get you back to work."

She didn't expect it, but she instantly felt dread rise up inside of her. She liked how things had been lately. Not being forced to make her head hurt and bleed from her nose. She had grown to like the gentle scratchiness of her bed sheets that she always chose to sleep over every time before. She had actually started to look forward to Papa

reading to her every day.

The next day, however, was when things changed again. Only this time, it really wasn't her fault. She had been made spy on somebody and repeat back what the subject was saying into his phone. Only what Eleven had transmitted to Brenner through the speaker was not what he had wanted to hear. He was hoping to obtain some valuable intel that he could bring to his superiors, but it appeared that this lead was a dead end.

It wasn't Eleven's fault. All she did was relay the message. Which is why she didn't understand why she was being hauled off of her chair and dragged out into the corridor. She noticed that the man who had hurt her had been replaced just like Papa said so it had given her some hope.

"Papa!"

He stepped out into the corridor and turned to face her, completely devoid of any emotion. And that's when she knew. It wasn't real. None of the affection he had shown her was real. When that orderly had hurt her, it wasn't Papa's child that had been injured, it was his subject that had been damaged. She meant nothing to him.

So she didn't struggle. Instead she just allowed herself to be dragged down the long corridor as she watched her Papa getting further and further away. And then, yet again, there was darkness.

Only darkness.